




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF TEACHERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (11.49 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Amendment Bill 2019. I support this amendment bill and acknowledge the opportunity that this bill provides the teaching profession. I cannot think of too many professions that impact as many lives in such a meaningful way as our teaching profession. In essence, despite having had successful careers elsewhere, that is what attracted me to the teaching profession.

As a teenager, I studied to be a psychologist. In the 1990s, psychology was considered to be the biggest growth profession. That was a good fit for the ethos that my parents had instilled in me of putting others before self and measuring your worth by how much you could make a positive difference to other people's lives. I was happy with my university studies, but during my psychology studies I was really intrigued with the opportunity to focus on educational psychology, early childhood development and sociology. The idea of becoming a practising psychologist was still a key driver, but I became more fascinated with the role of education in the life outcomes of individuals. It became clearer and clearer to me that I could consider spending a career counselling and helping people one on one, or I could be one of those people seeking to engage our younger people directly to provide opportunity, to provide support.

Although my psychology degree has been useful in certain circumstances, my biggest joy was obtaining my bachelor of secondary education. I loved it. English and history are two personal passions of mine and I was able to combine it with leading, supporting and cheering young people, introducing them to the wonders of knowledge and the power of inquiry. A young mind grasping and applying a new concept is a joy to behold.

My studies were not easy. I completed my full bachelor degree part-time, combining it with full-time policing, saving up all of my recreation leave to complete my practical teaching components. It was merely coincidental timing that I completed my bachelor of secondary education in the same cohort as my younger sister. I am sure our folks were proud and equally impressed at the opportunity to knock over two university graduations at the same time.

It is conversations with my sister that keep me attuned to what challenges our teachers are facing. I have followed her career from that first year: the hours and hours committed to building up her curriculum portfolios and resources, the occasional foray into random teaching subjects, all the weekend and after-school work with the junior secondary showcase programs, being voted Logan's favourite teacher, progressing to head of the drama department and now Mrs Vikki Kelly is head of junior school at Kingston College. She is now at the stage of her career where to progress she needs to leave the classroom. As head of the junior school, she has reduced class contact time but is reluctant to leave the classroom, because that is where job satisfaction is for teachers who truly wish to make a difference.

That is where this bill comes in. This bill provides a pathway, an opportunity for teachers who display quality teaching skills, who have committed many years to, and have a great passion for, the profession. This bill ensures that those teachers are not only recognised but also not lost to the classroom; they are not lost to the hundreds of young minds they have the opportunity to shape. Previously, the primary advancement for teachers was out of the classroom and either into the administration office or curriculum development. Great teachers in the name of professional advancement and the associated pay progression were leaving the classroom. Our young minds were being deprived of those who could have the biggest impact.

As with all things teaching related, I asked my sister what this amendment bill would mean to her and her colleagues. She said that it would be a fantastic opportunity to keep teachers who are passionate about teaching in the classroom. With the cost of living always on the rise, the pressure to earn more money is on every family. Many incredible teachers make the move up, but even more concerning is the number of teachers moving out of teaching altogether to find more financially rewarding ways to support their family. My sister said—

We've got the Senior Teacher and Experienced Senior Teacher processes but that's some 9 years into the profession when the drop out rates for teachers leaving in the first five years is greatly concerning to the profession. With highly accomplished teacher and lead teacher at least we may be able to keep some!

The designation of highly accomplished teacher and lead teacher will provide an additional career avenue for those highly qualified and experienced teachers to remain in the classroom. Although this designation will clearly benefit the teaching profession, it cannot be understated how it will benefit the thousands of kids in schools who will be engaged and influenced by our best and brightest teachers.

I support the decision to have the Queensland College of Teachers take on the role of certifying authority for the certification process for those applying. As the QCT is responsible for the registration of newly qualified and suitable teachers, it is ideally placed to take on the role of certification of the advanced levels of teaching.

Before I conclude this love letter to the teaching profession, I would like to acknowledge the dozens of state school teachers not only in my electorate but also for me specifically across the range of schools that I attended—from Tivoli in Ipswich, to Salisbury, to Graceville, to Runcorn and, finally, to Roma. I cannot say that I was an excellent student in school. I did what was required and mostly kept my head down, but just about all of my teachers would engage with me and encourage me to strive for better, to do more. In standing here, I really hope that I exceeded their expectations. I acknowledge Mrs Todd, Mr Grosset, Mr Bowler, Mrs Johnson and others in primary school. They loved the young kids and they really saw it as their passion to see them improve. My history teachers, Mrs Elvey and Mr McKillop, sparked my interest in history and tolerated my very interactive approach to military history. My English teachers, Mrs Fenton and Ms Eagle, at Runcorn State High School nurtured my rather idiosyncratic creativity. Mr Murray helped me refine my crash editing skills in film studies. Who knew I would still be using that skill? I would like to think that many of these teachers would have benefited from the opportunity to have their skills in the classroom appropriately recognised, because I know that I benefited greatly from them individually and collectively. I commend this bill to the House.